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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BEIJING 001698

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PARM](#) [PTER](#) [NATO](#) [MOPS](#) [MARR](#) [EAID](#) [CH](#) [PK](#) [AF](#)
SUBJECT: PRC: SCHOLARS DOWNPLAY POSSIBILITY OF HIGH-PROFILE CHINESE COOPERATION WITH UNITED STATES IN SOUTH ASIA

REF: A. SECSTATE 55536
[¶](#)B. BEIJING 1465

Classified By: Acting Political Minister Counselor Ben Moeling for reasons 1.4 (B/D).

Summary

[¶](#)1. (C) The United States "should not expect too much" from China in terms of high-profile advocacy of potentially controversial or unpopular strategies associated with the United States, particularly in Pakistan, Chinese academic contacts told the U.S. Embassy in recent weeks. They described PRC skepticism regarding the effectiveness of U.S. military strategies and noted that Chinese deference to Pakistani concerns limited China's ability to support U.S. efforts there. Scholars assessed that the Pakistan military operation to remove the Taliban from Swat would likely do more harm than good, with effects ranging from increased hostility towards the United States to the possibility of anti-Chinese terrorist activity. China's interests in the region included sourcing energy supplies in Central Asia, maintaining a stable and independent Pakistan, combating terrorism threats from Muslim populations inside and outside of China and avoiding the possibility of a U.S. residual military presence in Afghanistan. Only by taking these interests into account would the United States and China be able to make "step-by-step" progress on cooperation in the region. However, even with those interests in mind, U.S. moves to resettle Chinese Uighur Muslims in third countries had soured the atmosphere for Sino-U.S. cooperation, they said. End summary.

[¶](#)2. (C) MFA-affiliated China Institute of International Studies (CIIS) South Asia scholar Rong Ying told PolOff June 11 that the recent Pakistan military operation to push the Taliban out of Swat, though perhaps an effective short-term solution, might exacerbate the terrorist problem in the long-term, adding that the IDP population created by Pakistan military operations could be a source of more terrorists (see reftels for China's lukewarm response to our demarche requesting additional support for UN relief efforts for IDPs). Rong argued that the Pakistani public viewed the U.S. negatively because of the continuing UAV attacks, and Pakistanis believed that U.S. pressure had prompted the Pakistani government's military operation in Swat. He suggested that the resulting hardship suffered by the IDPs would be blamed on the United States. Rong argued that having the Taliban concentrated in Swat would have helped define the limits of their influence. In lieu of the military approach, he would have advocated a long-term solution that addressed the poverty factors that contributed recruits to the insurgency, thus gradually eroding Taliban influence. With the initiation of military action, this

potentially more effective possibility had been precluded, Rong said.

¶13. (C) CICIR scholar Fu Xiaoqiang told participants at a U.S. Embassy/CICIR-sponsored conference on security issues May 26 that China was concerned that Pakistani military activities in Swat would cause terrorist elements to spread out of the FATA into Central Asia, the Wakhan corridor and Kashmir and increase linkages among extremist groups in Punjab and Sindh provinces. He stated that the flow of IDPs out of Swat to other provinces had created tensions and spurred separatist activities elsewhere, such as Baluchistan. Anti-Chinese East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) activities would increase, including the possibility of targeting Chinese workers on the Karakorum road project and other Chinese infrastructure projects in the FATA. Lastly, he raised the concern that elements of ETIM, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, and other terrorist groups would link up to undertake terrorist activities within China.

Terrorists Acquiring Nuclear Materials Scenario

¶14. (C) CIIS' Rong noted recent media reports describing U.S. concerns about Pakistan's nuclear materials falling into terrorist hands had sent the signal to Pakistan that the United States had waning confidence in the Pakistan military. U.S. articulation of such concerns, Rong said, played into the hands of more anti-U.S. elements in the Pakistan military who believed U.S. contingency planning for such a terrorist attempt to cease Pakistani nuclear materials represented one

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element of a larger plot, involving India and Israel, to eliminate Pakistan's nuclear arsenal. Separately, Ministry of State Security-affiliated China Institutes for Contemporary International Relations scholar Fang Jingying, also a speaker at the May 26 U.S.-Embassy/CICIR conference, dismissed the terrorist nuclear threat scenario in Pakistan, arguing that the Pakistan military had firm control over the facilities and that concern over this possibility had drawn attention away from the more important concern of promoting economic development in the region.

China: Until You Walk A Mile in Pakistan's Shoes

¶15. (C) In a June 11 discussion with PolOff about Pakistan's threat perceptions in the region, CIIS South Asia scholar Lian Jianxue acknowledged that Taliban elements in Pakistan constituted a threat to Pakistan government central authority but insisted that Pakistan was justified in focusing on India as its primary strategic threat. While refusing to speculate as to how India would benefit from initiating armed conflict over Kashmir with Pakistan, for example, Lian said that China's policy took into account Pakistan's long-standing perceptions and concerns about India and that therefore "China will never pressure Pakistan" to take a particular course of action against the current insurgency but would support the decisions of Pakistani leadership on these matters.

¶16. (C) After lauding China's unquestioning support for Pakistan, Pakistan Embassy Political Counselor Shafqat Ali Khan (strictly protect) told PolOff June 3 that Pakistanis appreciated that "China 'has our back' in the UN Security Council, elaborating that Pakistan had always been able to rely on China to defend Pakistan's interests in the UN. Asked why Pakistan did not share such sentiment about the United States given its generous assistance and support to Pakistan, Khan acknowledged current U.S. support for Pakistan but suggested that U.S. policy could change, adding, "We're not Israel, you know."

"Don't Expect Too Much From China"

¶7. (C) CIIS' Rong insisted that, given its concerns over U.S. military tactics in the region and China's loyalty to Pakistan, the United States "should not expect too much from China" in terms of high-profile cooperation or joint advocacy of controversial or unpopular policies in the region, particularly in Pakistan. Rong suggested that if the United States took into account Chinese interests in the region, which he articulated as sourcing energy supplies in Central Asia, maintaining a stable and independent Pakistan, combating terrorism threats from Muslim populations inside and outside of China and alleviating PRC concerns about the possibility of a U.S. residual military presence in Afghanistan, then the United States and China could "slowly, step-by-step" find a common basis for cooperation and coordinated action in the region. Rong cautioned, however, that U.S. transfers of Chinese citizen Uighur detainees in Guantanamo Detention Facility to third countries had soured the atmosphere for cooperation.

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